

removed the images, how he celebrated the Mass, in what tongue he conducted the service. Until 1881 he had continually passed to and fro between Lutterworth and Oxford, but during the last years of his life he lived continuously in his parish. His occupations were sedentary. He did not even go round the neighbouring towns and villages where his Poor Priests were at work. The Leicester chronicler gives a detailed account of Lollard missions in the neighbourhood, but does not mention Wycliffe as taking part in them. This inactivity may have been dictated partly by his age and increasing infirmity, partly by a desire not to provoke measures against his own person. Above all, he could do better work in the study at Lutterworth. He sent out English pamphlets and Latin treatises, which show not only his extraordinary productiveness, but the constant progress of his thought. He, or his disciples at his instigation, translated the Scriptures into English for the laity—scattering pearls before swine, as the clerical party said.¹

The first Lollard who made any considerable impression on the people of Leicester was a priest named William Swyn-derby. Before attaching himself to the heretics he had played the local prophet on his own account, reproved the merry wives of Leicester for their gaiety, and even set up as a hermit. At last he joined some of Wycliffe's followers. They lived together in a little deserted chapel outside the walls of the city, where no one was likely to interfere with them. Here they encouraged each other in their strange opinions, and debated the new doctrines. Swyn-derby, who preached in all the churches and churchyards for miles round, was well known in Melton Mowbray, Market Harborough, and Loughborough. But in Leicester itself he had the greatest following of all. He preached not only in the Lollards' Chapel, but in the great churches of the city, for the parish priests were unwilling or unable to interfere. When at last the Bishop of Lincoln sent down to prohibit him from using sacred ground, he preached from a mill. The crowds that came out to hear him were greater than ever. He denounced the clergy, employing Wycliffe's arguments against the wealth of the

¹ See Ap.